

Shepherds of Ordinary Times

(Column 11: June 3, 2019)

By Lucia A. Silecchia

In these weeks when spring gives way to summer, many celebrate the Ordinations of new priests – new shepherds who, in these difficult days, commit the rest of their lives to the sacred service of God and the people of God. It is also the time when others celebrate the anniversaries of their own Ordinations. These Ordinations are times of great celebration and rejoicing. But, no less worthy of celebration and rejoicing are the many days when that vocation is lived with fidelity in unnoticed ways in ordinary times.

So, to all who celebrate their Ordinations at this time of the year:

We rejoice with you on the great day of these sacred promises solemnly made. We will pray for you on the ordinary days when those sacred promises are quietly kept.

We rejoice with you as you celebrate your very first Mass. We will pray for you when you celebrate your 6,836th Mass on an ordinary Thursday morning when your church roof is leaking, the weekly budget does not balance, and your daily calendar is overbooked.

We rejoice with you as you preach your first homily to an eager, proud congregation. We will pray for you on those ordinary Sundays when some of us may complain that your homily was too long, too short, too somber, too light-hearted, too conservative, too liberal – or, somehow, all of these things at the very same time.

We rejoice with you as you impart your first blessings to those who celebrate with you. We will pray for you on those ordinary days when the infidelity of others burdens you with the cross of being cursed or mocked for answering God's call to your priestly vocation.

We rejoice with your parents and family as they are by your side at this joyous time. We will pray for them on those ordinary days when the many demands of your parish family may keep you from them at important times in their own lives.

We rejoice with you when you receive the news of your first assignment with eager anticipation. We will pray for you on those ordinary days when you learn you must leave a parish family you have come to love to move on to a new assignment.

We rejoice with you when you will welcome new members to the Church through the grace of Baptism. We will pray for you on those ordinary days when you mourn for those leaving the Church and you seek to beckon them home with words of encouragement and understanding.

We rejoice with you when you are at the center of happy family pictures at the weddings you will witness. We will pray for you on those ordinary evenings when couples in trouble will pour out their grief to you and you pray for words of wisdom to guide them.

We rejoice with you when you and your first parish family celebrate the glory of the Christmas and Easter seasons together, united in joy for the first time. We will pray for you on those ordinary days when you and they are united in grief when tragedy of any kind strikes and you are called to grieve and comfort at the same time.

We rejoice with you when you are thanked and celebrated on your anniversary in the years to come. We will pray for you on the other 364 ordinary days of the year when, perhaps without thanks, you pray for us, make time for a troubled man in need, comfort a woman who grieves a lost child, say something in courageous love that few want to hear, sit through yet another unproductive or contentious meeting, and, more than once, answer your phone in the middle of the night.

Thank you for saying that sacred “*I am*” and “*I do*” that make that great “*yes*” on the day of your Ordination. And, thank you for all of the ordinary days to come when you will say “*yes*” over and over again as you live the lives of good shepherds in the light and shadows of ordinary times.

May God bless you.

Lucia A. Silecchia is a Professor Law at the Catholic University of America. "On Ordinary Times" is a biweekly column reflecting on the ways to find the sacred in the simple. Email her at silecchia@cua.edu.